

PROJECT SCOPING REPORT

**Interstate 10 Corridor Study
Jct. I-8 to Tangerine Road, Casa Grande – Tucson Highway
10 PN 199 H 6773 01 L**

Prepared for



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Introduction

The Arizona Department of Transportation (ADOT) and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) have begun a study of potential improvements to Interstate 10 (I-10) beginning at the Junction with Interstate 8 (I-8) in Casa Grande and continuing east to Tangerine Road (see Figure 1: Project Location Map and Figure 2: Project Vicinity Map) . The study will evaluate improvements to traffic flow and roadway capacity while avoiding or minimizing environmental, social, and economic impacts within the project limits. The purpose of the study is to evaluate improvements to the existing roadway to meet traffic demand anticipated in the design year. The year in the future for which the transportation facility will be designed to operate (known as the “design year”) for this project is 2030.

The study will provide a long range corridor plan for I-10 from the junction with I-8 to Tangerine Road (milepost 199 to 240). This portion of I-10 is anticipated to experience a substantial increase in vehicles due to population growth and planned development within the corridor. Without future improvements, this portion of I-10 will not be able to provide the capacity needed to handle projected traffic volumes.

The Scoping Process

The purpose of the scoping process is to identify potential issues, concerns, and opportunities (ICOs) that should be considered in the development of alternatives and environmental studies for the proposed highway improvements. ICO information was obtained from area residents, business owners, and government agency representatives through public and agency scoping meetings.

Agency Scoping

An agency scoping meeting was held on May 16, 2006, at 9:00 a.m. at the Marana Municipal Complex Conference Center. Notice of the meeting was sent to representatives of federal, state, and local agencies. The list of invited agency representatives, the meeting handouts, presentation, invitation, agenda, sign-in sheet, and meeting minutes are included in Appendix 1 along with letters received from agencies in response to the scoping invitation letter.

The meeting was attended by representatives of ADOT, FHWA, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), the City of Casa Grande, Arizona State Parks-Picacho Peak State Park, the Town of Marana, Pima Association of Governments, Central Arizona Association of Governments, Pinal County, City of Eloy, Arizona State Land Department (ASLD), Arizona Department of Public Safety (DPS), DMJM Harris, EcoPlan, Gordley Design Group, and Cambridge Systematics. The meeting was opened with a presentation which provided an overview of the project, the project objectives, discussion of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process, the purpose and need for the project, and planned action items and next steps. Following the presentation, an open discussion period was provided for attendees to share their specific issues, concerns, and opportunities for the project.

Figure 1: Project Location Map

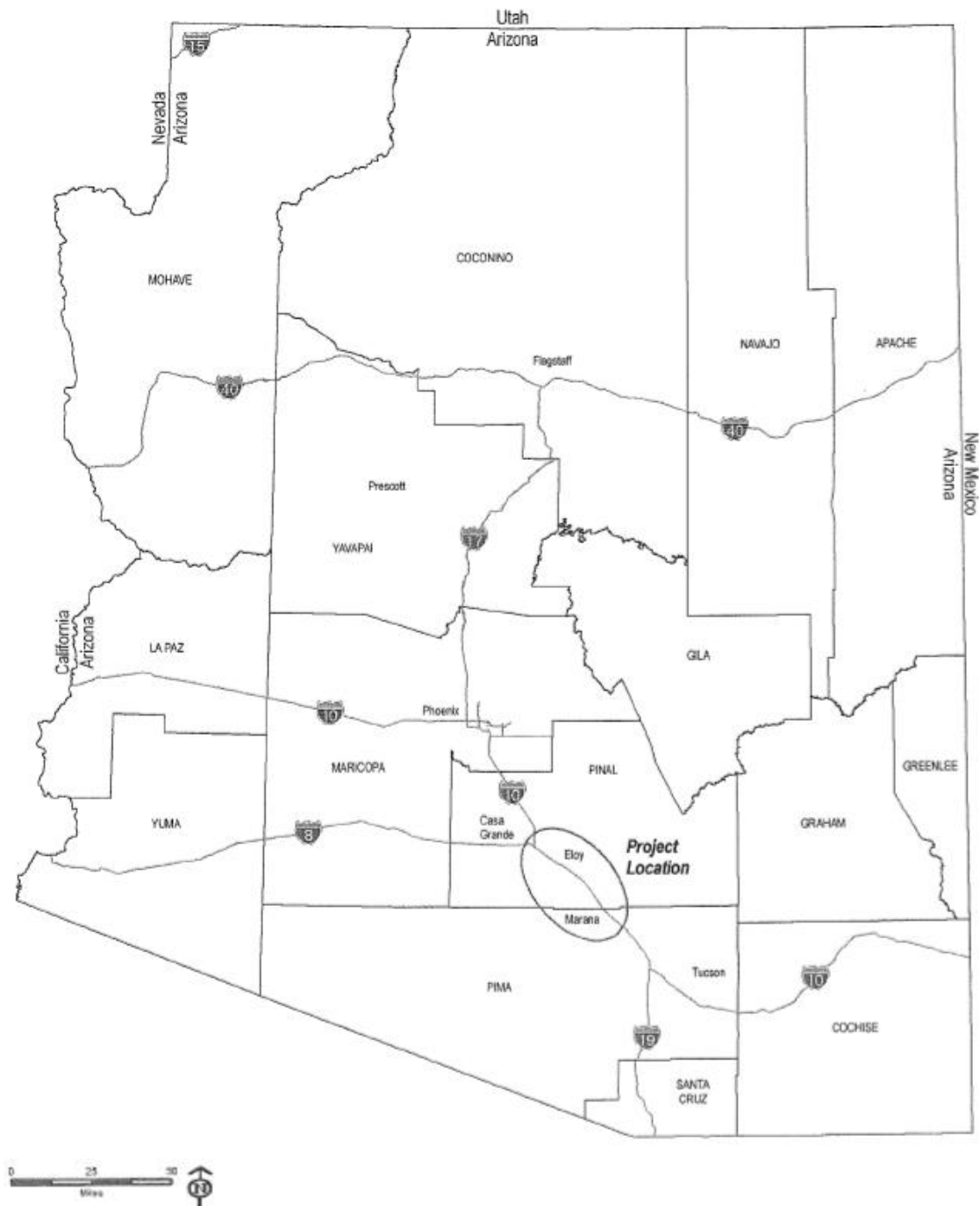
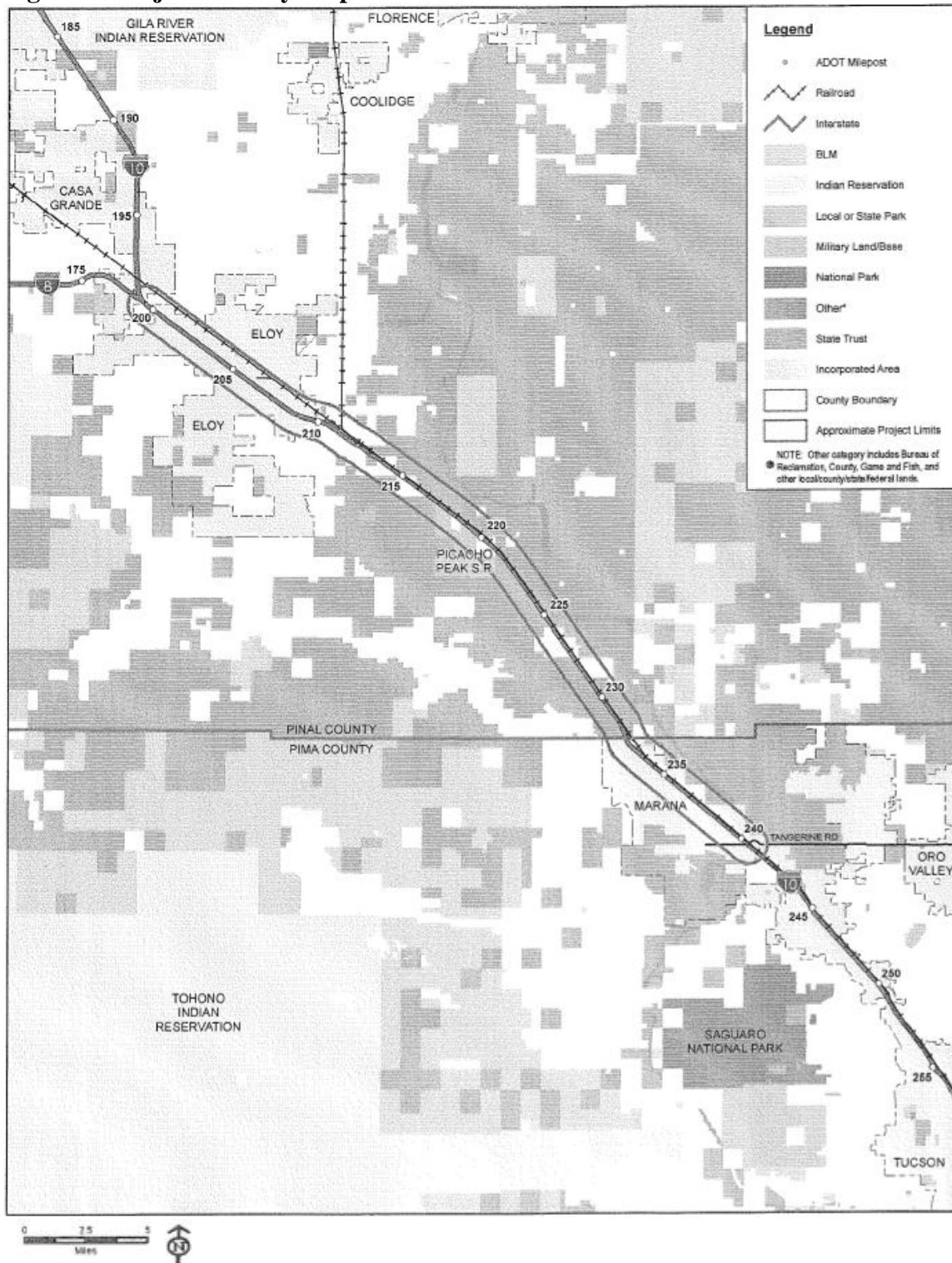


Figure 2: Project Vicinity Map



Agency Issues and Concerns

At the meeting, the agency representatives voiced the following ICOs regarding engineering considerations, alternate mode considerations, state trust lands, and environmental effects.

Engineering Considerations

- Drainage Issues
 - § Floodplains – water from Picacho Peak and the Tortolita Fan drains to I-10.
 - § Drainage crossings – there are many dip sections and 150 mainline crossings.
 - § During a 100 year flood event, McClellan Wash flows over top of the freeway. This is an existing condition from the 1960s, which may or may not be an issue now because of the completion of the CAP canal.
 - § Drainage data collection will need to be coordinated with FEMA and/or Army Corps.
- Railroad Issues
 - § Union Pacific Railroad (UPRR) will be adding an additional track; they are currently at capacity. UPRR will be at capacity with the future additional track.
 - § The I-10 Corridor Study will not preclude potential future commuter rail.
 - § If new overcrossings are proposed over the railroad, a construction management plan will have to be submitted to UPRR for approval at least 18 to 24 months prior to construction. It will have to include access to their corridor.
 - § The design of I-10 will have to include access to the railroad corridor; the railroad could maintain access with one-way frontage roads if recommended by the study.
- Frontage Road Issues
 - § The footprint and future capacity for utilities should be considered in the project.
 - § In Eloy, five wastewater treatment plants are planned; crossings will be needed under the freeway.
 - § Picacho Peak State Park uses the frontage roads during the peak tourist season when traffic is highest; back-ups occur as vehicles wait to pass through the fee payment gate.
 - § Regarding emergency access, two-way frontage roads are preferred for accidents; emergency response personnel will use them to access the disabled vehicles and to reroute traffic.

- § The Arizona State Land Department (ASLD) is completing a Master Planning effort for a portion of their holdings along I-10 that could include up to 80,000 dwelling units; two-way frontage roads are preferred for diverting traffic to these new neighborhoods. Coordination with local communities will be required to evaluate local access.
- § For Marana, the continuation of one-way frontage roads is a logical progression from the Tucson Metro Area.
- § Bicyclists in Pinal County currently use the frontage roads.
- Right-of-Way (R/W) Issues
 - § Need to be aware of all possible issues during the planning process to adequately plan for sufficient R/W.
 - § Providing for existing and proposed utilities should be included in R/W considerations.
- Interchange Issues
 - § During the study, the team will need to look at all crossings and the potential effects on utilities and future development.
 - § At the Red Rock Interchange, a planned six-lane expressway from SR-79 to I-10 and the subsequent development will need to be considered. In addition, Park Link Drive will be realigned to the north and a new interchange will be created.
 - § FHWA approves all new connections to local arterials from the interstate system. They have placed all recent requests on hold until the long term plan has been completed. They do not want a lone interchange serving one development, which would cause the residents to use the interstate for small trips. That is not the purpose of the interstate.
 - § Consider the spacing between the interchanges for future potential freeway connections; want to avoid potential operational issues.
 - § The Town of Marana has a Major Routes Plan that includes a connection from Tangerine Road to Marana Road and a new interchange at Moore Road that will connect to Tangerine Road.
- Median Issues
 - § There are existing utilities that run between the control of access line and the frontage roads.
 - § Emergency response – need to include in the design of median crossovers for emergency vehicles; close spacing (approximately ¼ mile) is important. Considerations for each alternative is based on Arizona Department of Public Safety observations:
 - Barrier – difficult to cross the median; could decrease fatal accidents.

- Open Median – larger R/W requirements for I-10; ideal for patrol cars; could contribute to fatal accidents with drivers making u-turns and accelerating into high speed traffic.
- § The highway was originally conceived as a rural highway with an open median. If a barrier were to be constructed in the median, will be getting away from the rural character.
- § Could potentially add signage in the medians that warn drivers of the dangers when crossing a median.
- Rest Areas
 - § Will the study consider rest areas?
 - § A rest area was once proposed by ADOT at the County line but was abandoned.

Alternate Mode Considerations

- Bicyclists in Pinal County currently use the frontage roads.
- Pedestrian access may be an issue in Eloy and Picacho Peak in the future.
- Park-n-Ride lots should be a consideration.

State Trust Lands Considerations

- Several projects which would include approximately 80,000 new homes are being planned in the following state lands corridors: Picacho Peak to South Park (east of CAP) and I-10 to Oracle Junction.
- Implications of predicted 80,000 homes:
 - § Spacing between new and existing interchanges
 - § Congestion
 - § Access
 - § Emergency response
- The Urban Master Plan will be completed in two years.
- Coordination with the State Trust Lands consultants – Jack Neubeck or Linda Morales – is necessary during the course of the project.

Environmental Considerations

- Potential community impacts in the unincorporated areas around Picacho.
- The accommodation of wildlife connectivity.
- Tucson shovel-nose snake may be listed on the USFWS list of Threatened and Endangered Species.

- The cactus ferruginous pygmy-owl may be delisted.

Public Scoping

Three Public Scoping meetings were held for the project as follows:

- September 12, 2006 at the Marana Municipal Complex, 2nd Floor Conference Room, 11555 West Civic Center Drive, Marana, Arizona. The meeting was conducted from 5:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.
- September 14, 2006 at the Troy Thomas Center, 501 West 3rd Place, Eloy, Arizona. The meeting was conducted from 5:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.
- September 19, 2006 at the City of Casa Grande Council Chambers, 510 East Florence Boulevard, Casa Grande, Arizona. The meeting was conducted from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.

Notice of the meetings was provided in local newspapers, including:

- Arizona Daily Star – Tuesday, August 29, 2006
- Tucson Citizen – Tuesday, August 29, 2006
- Explorer – Wednesday, August 30, 2006
- Casa Grande Tri Valley Dispatch – Wednesday, August 20, 2006 and Wednesday, September 6, 2006
- Arizona City Independent – Wednesday, August 20, 2006 and Wednesday, September 6, 2006
- Gila River Indian News – Friday, August 18, 2006 and Friday, September 15, 2006
- The Ak-Chin O’Odham Runner – Friday, August 18, 2006 and Friday, September 1, 2006

Notice was also provided via a jurisdictional letter e-mailed the week of August 21, 2006; a newsletter which announced the meetings mailed the week of August 21, 2006; and news releases provided to area media the weeks of August 28, 2006 and September 4, 2006.

Study Team members were available before and after the meetings to informally discuss the project. Several exhibits were utilized to facilitate discussion including maps and other graphics to illustrate the project area and surrounding features. All materials utilized at the public meetings are provided in Appendix 2. Appendix 2 also includes a flier which was prepared for distribution at the request of the Red Rock School District. No additional comments were received as a result of the distribution of this flier.

One hundred and two people attended the meetings. The meetings began with an introduction of the Project Team followed by a slide presentation. The presentation included discussion of the study background, activities to date, project purpose and need,

design issues and impacts and the environmental study process. The presentation was followed by a question-and-answer session. Questions and comments received at the meeting are also provided in Appendix 2.

Public Issues and Concerns

Eleven people submitted comments either by returning a comment form provided at the meetings or by submitting a letter before or after the meetings. The comment form provided at the meetings requested that people state preferences for features of the two alternative configurations under consideration at the time of the meetings. The comment forms posed the following questions:

- What did you like the most about Alternative 1?
- What did you like the least about Alternative 1?
- What did you like the most about Alternative 2?
- What did you like the least about Alternative 2?

Summaries of the responses to those questions are provided below.

What did you like the most about Alternative 1?

- Tortolita Interchange, Moore Road Interchange, Tangerine, SR 87 Traffic Interchange.
- Alternative 1 would allow for more growth potential since it has more interchanges. This makes good sense.
- Additional interchanges at Aries Drive and Green Road.

What did you like the least about Alternative 1?

- No north-south corridor.
- It would interfere with a portion of our facility, forcing us to move our facility to another location.
- Picacho Interchange – do not use other one. Relocate just north of current.
- Cuts off too much of Tweed Road business area.
- I think the proposed “bypass” at Picacho on Alternative 2 would be much better.
- Interchange at Tweedy Road; moving Sunland Gin interchange 1/8 mile to the east.

What did you like the most about Alternative 2?

- Tortolita Interchange.
- The expansion would not affect the Alsdorf overpass. The cost of buying out our facility and others might be less.

- I like the Battaglia options – this will service Arizona City, Toltec and Eloy.
- More interchanges and bypass Picacho.
- Interchange at Battaglia Road (better access to Arizona City and downtown Eloy versus interchange at Tweedy).

What did you like the least about Alternative 2?

- Proposed north-south corridor.
- The interchange and railroad overpass should be at Missile Base road with a new road west of I-10 to the air park.
- Relocation on I-10 at Picacho.

Many of the other comments received address issues associated with the future configuration and features of the roadway and Traffic Interchanges (TIs). The remainder of the comments received are summarized below.

- There should be a 65 mph speed limit and lane restrictions for trucks.
- Pleased with plans for grade separation at railroad crossings.
- Request that the widening include the use of rubberized asphalt (quiet pavement).
- Request for art on overpasses and palo verde trees in the median.
- Current situation causes trucks to back up on Arica to Sunland Gin Road, blocking neighborhood access.
- Frontage roads in addition to expanding the number of lanes are critical for the growth of the area.
- Inclusion of Park and Ride lots would be nice for future carpooling and light/heavy rail use.
- Owners of 185 acres at the southwest corner of Sunland Gin Road and Jimmie Kerr Boulevard are concerned about TI configurations at those two locations as well as at the I-10/I-8 Junction, the scheduling of interim widening of I-10 north of MP 199, and implementation of additional R/W acquisition for the I-10 ultimate widening.
- Concerned with any relocation of the Tangerine Road/I-10 TI.

A complete summary of all public comments received at the scoping meetings as well as those received subsequent to the meetings via the project website or comment sheets is provided in Appendix 3.

Conclusion

Information received as part of the agency and public scoping process was utilized by the project team to refine the limits of the project and to focus future environmental study efforts. Findings generated during the scoping process were also presented to project area stakeholders in subsequent meetings.